

Bernard-Stevens, on the Beutler amendment.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I rise in support of the Beutler amendment. It goes...it goes...it addresses the subject that I tried to get to before. Because of some of the other legislation we've had, I'm specifically thinking, I think the number was 803 and some of the other legislation we've had in the past, I'm hoping and I hope the intent is very clear on this that we're not trying to set up another entitlement. My fear was if the federal dollars went away, whether it would then be argued and could be argued in court that it was an entitlement and we have to put the monies to replace. And the Beutler amendment does go, I think, a step in the right direction, and maybe two steps in the right direction in setting the exact tone of what it is that we are not trying to do. And so I hope the record shows that and I hope it's enough. At this point there's nothing that tells me that it won't be enough, but I'm still a little bit cautious on this portion of it. But I will support the amendment, it does help the bill, and I'll still be supporting the bill at Final Reading, but I'm going to be looking very closely at the potential problem of whether or not it is an entitlement before we get to Final Reading.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Beutler, there are no further lights on. You are recognized to close on your amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, let me say by way of preface that I'm certainly not against this bill, I'm very much in favor of this bill. I think it has many good aspects, in particular of course getting the additional federal funds to help people who need help is very important, nor am I against putting more money into this from state funds at some reasonable level. But I believe that that level should be determined by us after a full and fair debate and that we ought not be stuck making increases the size of which or the nature of which neither we may approve of simply by virtue of entitlements being created by this bill inadvertently. And so what the amendment attempts to do is simply again to indicate that that is not our intent, it's not our intent to create entitlements. And if that should happen we except the agencies to take action with respect to the program in such ways as they are able, in order that the state contributions...state fund appropriations will remain at the level that we appropriated.